

a condition which also affected the functioning of the others, he was ill or emotionally disturbed.<sup>14</sup> For example, dropsy, swelling, and yellow eyes came from excess water; cholera and constipation from earth mists. Wind and fire were the great trouble-makers.

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Wind "was stronger than the other three elements." Either blowing wind or still air easily penetrated the skin and caused difficulties all the way from flatulence, stomach-ache and diarrhea to a minor head-ache and dizziness ("if wind whirls inside the body, the house swims around"); from incessant crying to serious interference with breathing, hence fainting and death. An accident, such as a cut or broken bone, disturbed, and might "let out," the air. Acute pain ensued if "rigidity" of earth, fire, or water interfered with the proper movements of the internal winds.

Anger and fever were both in the category of excess fire. Since fire was particularly implicated in disturbed social relations, coolness was emphasized as the desirable state of body and mind. The blessings for both sexes at birth and at the marriage ceremonies enjoined the individual to be "cool and happy." There was some evidence that cool natures were tender (qn) natures. Since women by nature were assumed to be "tender," and men not, a difference in element constitution may have been sex-linked. However, everyone knew of women who were not tender. For persons abundantly endowed with fire, temper control through temperature control was a constant preoccupation, for the allowable margin of fluctuation was especially narrow.

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Food occupied an especially important place in a person's welfare because food controlled the fire element.<sup>15</sup> The following material on diet is the background for some of the dietary injunctions during pregnancy and lactation.

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14. In view of Thailand's ancient Indian contacts, the parallels (and differences) between Bang Chan, and Hindu Ayurveda as described by Opler (1963:32-35), are noteworthy.

(177) •

15. "What was drunk or eaten by its decaying created the fire element in the body" (Suriyabongse 1954:12).

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cried, Lek had dribbled from her finger warm boiled water into his mouth. Now she mashed up for him a little kluai nam banana, honey, and water. Song happened to pass as he was going to work and saying, "Let me give it to my son this first time," took the child in his arms, and pushed it gently in with his fingers. "This variety of banana does not cool, or give diarrhea because its tissue is harder. Uncooked is better than baked because it is easier for the baby to swallow," said Lek, "but baked food is incompatible if wind is in the body." Then she painted medicine on the baby's tongue with a feather.

Duan turned to Lek. "Who would be the best person to start my child on good nursing habits?" Lek mentioned a relative who had much milk for her handsome child. This woman gladly came to give the baby his first suck.

Sai came the third day for the same duties. It was the last day for her, unless something serious happened. Duan's milk came in somewhat that day. She asked, "Is it true, as people say, that the 2 breasts give milk of different consistency, that one is water and the other rice?" Sai answered, "That is an old saying. The important thing is to feed from both breasts at each nursing. Here is medicine for the baby of honey, charred betel leaf, and water. Give it 3 times a day to cool his neck. His medicine is mostly to cool him slowly; yours is to keep you hot on the inside, while the fire warms you outside. Both are to keep out wind. Duan, I would suggest 13 days by the fire, but you are the one to decide. It was 15 for your first child, but each time can be less. Be sure it is an odd number of days. My, women are certainly making it short these days! My first fire-rest was 27 days. And think of all the changes coming in! That trader-woman across the canal is using one of those small hot-ashes pots on her stomach. She is lying on a mat under her net, with her new baby. Her 2 other little children come in and out! No fire at all! I have heard they use rubber hot water bottles and electric warming devices in Bangkok. Well, it probably is all right provided there is heat, but to have plenty of milk and strength to work in the fields, then you have to lie by a real fire. The longer you stay, the stronger you are. Bangkok ladies do not have to farm! They want the fire for the fine pale golden color it gives their skin (cf. footnote, p. 71)! Well, now I shall take my final leave." She reached up and took her khwan khao bowl. Smiling, she left the house.

From then on, Lek and Mi were certainly busy, caring for both children, doing things for Duan, boiling up quantities of water, and cooking. Song put the wood on

178 a new way was a woman bearing her first child because she  
184 was not yet ritually matured. This she wanted to be.  
372 Moreover, her self-interest led her to try to profit as  
846 much as possible from the experience of elders by first  
885 following the old way. By incorporating the experience  
of successful child-bearers into her own and the baby's  
life and by asking them to initiate actions auspiciously,  
she augmented by that much her own competence, and laid  
the groundwork for her future progress. Self-responsibility engendered respect for elders. Thus there was no split between old and young over innovations. Experience gave grounds both for conservatism and for changing, but at different age levels.

178 Secondly, changes were adopted by the rich who,  
184 spending their money rather conspicuously, sought to maintain and enhance their social position. Their wealth  
556 and position were in themselves unquestioned as signs of merit earned in another incarnation.

178 The changes being introduced to Bang Chan were of two  
554 kinds: first the prestigious, and second, those giving no increment of esteem, i.e. idiosyncratic changes of taste or convenience; or those reflecting individual circumstances. The prestigious innovations were oriented towards the use of market novelties, modern medical care, urban standards of cleanliness and beauty, and other ways termed "progressive" associated with the city of Bangkok, cynosure of the eyes of the rich. These values were leading certain families away from their original occupation of farming, into the fields of teaching, trading, carpentering, cottage-industry, etc. Since these new occupations brought in steady cash and large land holders, too, had a good income, an association was found of wealth, prestige, urban interests, and innovation. Comment on the hot ashes container (*fai chut*) indicated that it was a strong symbol of prestige and progress. To use it was "to get away from ignorance and the old way of doing things." It was "cleaner, not hot or ugly, and more convenient." One teacher took it up after reading an advertisement in the newspapers that described glowingly its more efficient healing effect. On the other hand, one woman abandoned the *fai chut* because "it was not hot enough to rid her of stiff muscles," so she went back to the use of the fire. "It is all right for rich Bangkok ladies who want to avoid a scar, but it does not give enough strength for a farmer." She had no urban pretensions. Also in this prestigious aggregate, observed here and there, were the market novelties mentioned above: bed, mat, and mosquito net instead of the plank-bed; kits of medicine from the Chinese pharmacist instead of the old

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home brew; rub-on medicine (ya chup) instead of a fire or fire-container; canned cows' milk, and nursing bottles for the baby, and the bottles washed with salt; the transfer of a baby from the tray to the cloth cradle before the termination of the fire-rest because "he needed fresh air;" and the rejection of the turmeric rub against the wind element as "dirty and ugly."

To use modern medical care was becoming prestigious. Most spectacular here was a case of a prosperous and educated man who had had 9 children, then "feared he could not feed them all," so underwent voluntarily a vasectomy. Patronage of the second class doctors who used modern medications but explained them in traditional terms was frequent among the well-to-do. The Minburi Health Center, a resource in case of over-long and difficult labor, was beginning to be seen as a fashionable place to go for medical care and parturition. The case of the 7 teachers who laid plans ahead to go to the Center (but their quick labor precluded attempting to get there) showed that prestige had a stronger lure than convenience at times. It was much more convenient to bear a child at home, yet one of these teachers even talked about wanting to be delivered in Bangkok at the Woman's Hospital, an extreme of prestige and practical inaccessibility.

The drive toward progressiveness led to conscious re-examining of those "old ways" that could be visually tested. One woman said, "There are fewer spirits (phi) nowadays." There was the mother who pondered the maxim about burning up all the wood collected by the husband to make a child finish tasks when he grew up. Finding it not true, she abandoned it at her next confinement. A man said that the old belief that papaya should not be planted near the house because "it dies easily and doesn't like water," and so would affect a child, was "unreasonable because the harm was not specific (e.g. a threat to skin or eyes). If specific, I might believe it." An opening wedge of disbelief was noted where a woman gave no bit of rice to her baby to start a habit for later benefits because "she was told but didn't believe it," and another who said the "winnowing rite was not important."

In addition to prestigious changes were those due to individual circumstance, taste or preference, and convenience unaffected by social aspirations. One woman rejected going to the Minburi Center for delivery and took up the hot-ashes container instead of a fire because she could better direct her older children, and "it was less hard on them." A poor woman took no medicine during pregnancy because she had no money to buy it. A comment that of recent years medicines were purchased because "women are too lazy to make them up" as in the old days, sounded more personal than socially significant. A change induced by lack of money was that "hot spices

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846 are less eaten today because they are too expensive."

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[571] A slight trend towards depersonalization might be part of the aping of urban behavior, or idiosyncratic, or of more general significance.<sup>76</sup> The Minburi Health Center may have been used to avoid certain face-to-face situations. A woman whose labor was prolonged was taken there by her (male) midwife who had to get to a meeting. He preferred the impartiality of the Center to turning her over to another midwife. A woman took up the hot ashes container so "others would not have to wait on her." Another appeared to have obtained a midwife from outside the community rather than seek out someone inside and closer at hand. A very poor woman used no boiled water because of inadequate help in the household to prepare it. Whatever the circumstances of her social isolation, ordinarily kin or neighbors would have seen to it that this job was done. This episode too was watched by neighbors who commented that since her health remained good, boiling might be unnecessary. Finally, to advertise certain medicines, a firm handed out yan, the magically inscribed cloth, to suspend on the holy cord that surrounded the mother. This was a long way from the personally inscribed "yan" of old.

[812] A final reason for the acceptance of change was the larger number of choices of behavior because of a broader horizon. Bang Chan had never been an isolated community, for pilgrimages and visiting through easy boat-travel had been for decades part of its life. Yet the growing number of literates, the establishment of bus and other transportation services to the city, the experience, for a few, of work in Bangkok or of military service in Korea, the continuous association with non-Thai, (Chinese, Muslims, a Cambodian, and now the Americans), and the now somewhat diversified economy of the community all led to the increased familiarity with other ways of doing things. Patterns of childbirth were already reflecting this awareness.

[177] Unchanging in the scene at childbirth was the necessity of supernatural assistance, and heat to ripen and restore the mother.

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76. I feel this evidence is slight, and set it down merely as a point for future observation.

## Chapter IX

## GUIDES FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF CHANGES

The government of Thailand provides in Bangkok and in other centers of the country up-to-date facilities for training in modern midwifery. It has also created in some places special opportunities for the traditional midwives to upgrade their skills. One of the objectives of the Minburi Health Center was to carry on a certain amount of instruction in modern views. For reasons that have been explained, no one in Bang Chan ever had or even sought modern instruction. The midwives of whom we have spoken grew up entirely in the folk tradition.

On the basis of the material presented at length in the previous pages, a few suggestions are here advanced which may be of help to these public programs in maternal and child health.

1. Build a program around the idea that it will help women in their age-old role of caring for, raising, and nourishing (liang) children. Emphasize that through new techniques they may increase their strength and care better for themselves and the babies.
2. Change existing practices as little as possible.
3. When a change is offered, ask that the midwife, mother, or whoever observed it watch for certain results which allow them to judge it in relation to the old. The idea is strong that aspects of the natural world can be analyzed and considered pragmatically, then legitimately utilized as a basis for modifying customary behavior.
4. Pay special attention to the places where the old and the new come into conflict and seek ways to resolve these conflicts.

As an example, let us consider these points in relation to cutting the umbilical cord. Modern instruction recommends the use of scissors--neat, sterilizable, handy--to avoid infection while cutting the cord. People in Bang Chan wish to avoid this infection, too, but for them scissors are unsatisfactory for several reasons: they are scarce, they rust--and

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this rust is believed to cause tetanus--and they are unsuitable for the ritual objective at the moment of cutting. It will be remembered that cutting the cord on a rhizome of phlai or soil with a bamboo sliver from the housepost guarantees that a child will not roam away from home. Could the bamboo sliver be dipped in "heating" alcohol, or passed over the flame of a holy fire? Could the old family kitchen-knife--long associated with the household--be substituted and dipped in the beneficial heat of boiling water? Such a knife once was substituted on the winnowing tray. Might the phlai or soil be covered with a boiled, clean, old cloth? If modern science succeeds in coming up with an acceptable substitute, one sees the possibility of a very small change making a big difference in the amount of tetanus poisoning observed (Hauck, 1956:41). One should then ask the midwives to watch as to whether the new method reduced the infection called "death because of a red or green face and clenched fists."

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In diet "the concept that a good choice of food is important to the health of both mother and child" (Hauck, 1959:2) was very much shared by modern science and by traditional ideas but the basis of choice was entirely different.<sup>77</sup> Modern science has ascertained that certain foods are beneficial because of certain nutrients, while old beliefs have set up certain foods as desirable because of properties of heating, cooling, compatibilities with the elements, etc. The nature of these properties should be collected and listed. If dietary deficiencies in Bang Chan are noted, the foods that combine the needed beneficial qualities in both systems should be stressed. A hot-tasting tonic (xā) with appropriate dietary supplements, to be taken daily during pregnancy, and another kind during the post-partum period, might be acceptable. The period of the fire-rest is the best place to initiate dietary changes for whatever is done by the fire becomes a habit beneficial to mother and child. The use of boiled water should be encouraged as "making for strength." Again, disturbance of customs is minimized, and the presence or absence of "increased strength" and healthiness can be observed experientially.

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77. Hauck felt the concept was lacking, but it appears only that the grounds of choice were different.

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795 the slight differences in ministrations. "The Muslim midwife massages more than the Buddhist." The women easily entered into reciprocal courtesies. The Muslim woman knew the steps in the Buddhist winnowing ceremony and performed them as desired. One Buddhist mother dispensed, however, with the winnowing "because the midwife was Muslim." A Buddhist woman made up the khwan khao in the fashion specified by the Muslim midwife and participated in the latter's teacher-rite.

795 Certain fundamental ideas of the Muslims led to reinterpretations of familiar Buddhist terms and activities. 779 "Khwan" referred to the soul, but with no implication of reincarnation. 774 "Bun," meaning "merit" to the Buddhist, meant charitable giving in the sense of tithes, for Islam 782 prescribed that a portion of one's income be given to the poor. On the other hand, the Muslims had taken over many 177 Buddhist practices: for one, the acceptance of Buddhist holy water as a cure for spirit attack.

795 Completely Muslim was the stress on physical and moral purification as an objective of every rite, and conversely, the prevalence of the idea of defilement. 1783 "Circumcision is to cleanse the body before growing up," it was said. Muslim mortuary rites were elaborate procedures for purification. When a Muslim baby died, the 304 Buddhist midwife said, "The body was cleaned before 1764 burial," implying thorough measures beyond his ordinary experience. Procreation was viewed as dangerous and 1831 contaminating. The behavior that hid sexual phenomena at the same time by constant prescriptions kept sexuality 1834 much more in mind. Muslims separated males from females, for example, at feasts. No Muslim male ever became a 562 midwife.

795 The events surrounding childbirth illustrated the differing viewpoints between Muslim and Buddhist. In the 843 seventh month of her pregnancy, a Muslim woman called on 844 on her chosen midwife, and gave her a gift of betel pepper leaves and areca nut to assure her services (thong: to deposit gold). On returning home, she went as fast as possible "to insure fast delivery." Since 273 Muslims frowned on liquor, their medicines were made up of hot-tasting spices in hot water. Yet one Muslim midwife prescribed large doses of liquor before and during 795 parturition. For labor and delivery, a Muslim was 844 stricter about utilizing the privacy of the small enclosed room, if there were one, while in the Buddhist household "it could be anywhere" in the house. Muslim men, except for husband, brother, or father, were excluded 562 from the scene. The Muslim khwan khao contained "

231 was given away fresh to selected kin and friends, including  
242 those who helped to butcher, and the remainder was salted  
754 and dried. Of this, 7 kg. were kept and 5 kg. sold. Moslems  
are forbidden to eat an animal with two or four legs which  
dies," although eating dead locusts or fish is not forbidden.  
131 Some Moslems in Bang Chan reported offering dead animals to  
Buddhists in barter for other materials.

231 Cows, a sign of prosperity, were bought as calves by  
the Moslems and fattened for meat, usually with a ceremony in  
mind. In 1955 (Goldsen and Hallis, 1957) only 5 householders  
in Bang Chan raised hogs, and 4 of these had 1 or 2 only.  
Moslems ate no pork. A permit from the district officer was  
necessary for slaughtering a buffalo or an ox but not for  
hogs. Natural deaths of such animals were supposed to be re-  
ported.

235 Poultry was not commonly used for food in Bang Chan.  
242 It was the poor man's "feast" food suitable for guests. One  
434 couple in the lowest income level killed one chicken or a  
duck once a year to provide the traditionally good meal for  
their cooperative harvest helpers. Others, better off, might  
serve chicken especially at men's dinners. Pigeons were  
raised for sale in the market by one Moslem family. In 1953-  
1954, one person was trying to raise a few turkeys for sale, as  
word had reached Bang Chan that turkeys were in demand for  
foreigners' holiday dinners. By 1957 turkey-raising for cash  
was spreading; but some villagers objected to having them  
around "because they look like vultures and bring misfortune."

224 Various wild creatures were used for food whenever they  
were caught. Turtle curry was considered a great delicacy,  
but as turtles, which could be caught from May to February,  
brought a good price in Bangkok, experts usually sold their  
catch. Frogs and turtles were sometimes kept in a jar until  
needed. Hais, frogs, cobra and other snakes were used for  
curry. Field rats, available all year, were roasted.

224 Fish. - Next to rice, fish constituted the most abun-  
dant food in the diet in Bang Chan. Either fresh or pre-  
served, they were available throughout the year. Killing

251 1. According to observation in 1952-54, fish caught in  
excess of immediate needs were preserved for later use. Ser-  
pentheads ( (1)plaa (3)chuaun), which are about 7 or 8  
inches long, and pilot fish ( (1)plaa (2)sa-(2)lid), about 4  
or 5 inches long, were commonly salted and dried. Heads and  
tails were removed and the fish were split open and salted  
overnight. The following morning the fish were washed and  
spread on fiber trays in the sun to dry. Some excess fish  
might be dried at anytime of year, but larger quantities were  
done during the hot, dry season. The process was usually  
complete within a week.

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262 constipation in infants, others that it caused diarrhea, whether  
753 eaten directly by the infant or by the mother.

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The belief that eggs would cause dental caries, and should therefore be omitted from children's diets, was expressed by the mother in a poorly nourished family. The possibility that such ideas arose from unwillingness to spend much money on food for a child has already been noted (see p. 42).

262 Information on food suitable in illness was obtained  
753 only incidentally. The Thai did not appear to have a consistent theory as to the cause of disease (Sharp et al. 1956, p. 489), and residents of Bang Chan did not seem to associate any of their illnesses with contaminated food or water. Choice of food in illness was probably associated in some instances with the idea that the body is composed of the four elements: wind, water, fire and earth, and that sickness results from or is a symptom of imbalance in the proportions or arrangement of these elements. Thus the "fragrant banana" and eggs, because of their "cooling effect," were said to be forbidden in measles. A child who was getting measles was restricted to rice and dried fish. In contrast the small, [885] rather flavorless banana, designated (3)kluaj (4)nan-(4)waa, was said to have "no cooling effect" and was considered an acceptable food in illness, as well as for newborn infants.

262 In one instance, when a patient had been taken to the  
753 hospital with severe diarrhea, a nurse instructed other family  
784 members not to eat ices, syrup (see p. 36), or raw vegetables, nor to drink unboiled water. The informant who told us about this offered no reason for these precautions. These foods were simply "forbidden" to the family of a patient with severe diarrhea.

777 Notions as to what is fortunate or unfortunate may also  
829 affect agricultural processes. The many ceremonies associated  
245 with culture and use of rice have been mentioned (p. 42). The idea that a papaya tree growing near the house was "unlucky" was attributed to Thai by a young Thai Moslem in Bang Chan. When we commented on the papaya tree near his front door, he said the papaya tree dies easily and does not like water, but his was planted on high ground. According to this informant few villagers would be willing to grow papaya trees near the house. He considered the non-specific threat of harm as unreasonable, though he said that if specific harm were said to result, he would be concerned about it. The midwife at Min-buri Health Center said that she urged each woman who came there for delivery to have more banana, mango and papaya trees planted for home use. Before raising of papayas can be successfully encouraged, however, the idea that papaya trees bring back luck must be overcome.

Notes on Tilapia Culture in Bang Chan

226 In 1952, the Thai government, at the suggestion of FAO,  
[54] began to encourage tilapia culture. Fingerlings and some in-  
formation on tilapia culture could be obtained from the Min-  
buri district office, where a demonstration pond was main-  
tained. Early in 1953, we learned from the records of the  
district officer that three persons in Bang Chan, two of them  
hamlet headmen, had obtained tilapia from this source. In  
1953 the commune chief called a meeting in the village and  
explained the importance of tilapia raising. In May 1955  
when Ralis conducted a survey in Bang Chan (Goldsen and Ralis,  
1957), tilapia raising had been tried in nearly a third (31%)  
of the households, but was considered by 2/3 of the respon-  
dents to pay little.

The authors comment:

From discussions with the people it appears that they  
are learning by trial and error to raise tilapia.  
Though fish culture is, for them, mainly a sideline  
activity, nevertheless, it requires the building of a  
special dam, care in preventing other fish from de-  
vouring young tilapia and maintaining the appropriate  
balance of fresh water in a given pool. The loss re-  
sulting from the fish dying or being eaten by others  
is relatively high. Although tilapia multiply  
[434] rapidly, the cash return is not as great as that  
realized from mushroom growing. The cycle of raising  
tilapia lasts about four months.

From the comments just quoted, tilapia culture appears  
to have been undertaken for the anticipated cash return. No  
[44] information was obtained by Ralis concerning the extent to  
which the villagers used tilapia to increase their supply of  
fish for home use. In the summer of 1957 members of the re-  
search group who visited Bang Chan found that no one was  
raising tilapia; they were neither a source of food nor of  
cash. Some indication was obtained that their flavor and  
texture were not agreeable. Clearly the attempt to introduce  
a rapidly growing but unfamiliar variety of fish failed in  
Bang Chan. An understanding of the reasons for this failure  
might help to prevent other costly failures in future.

Notes on Mushroom Culture in Bang Chan

• 197 Goldsen and Ralis (1957) commented as follows:  
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Three years ago the commercial growing of mushrooms  
in Bang Chan was unknown. By 1955, the practice of  
growing mushrooms had reached into many homes (44 per

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cent of the respondents report that they have engaged in this activity). Even if no mushrooms have ever been grown in a given household, it is still likely that the individuals in it are aware of the practice and have observed it closely through the mushroom growing activities of their friends, relatives, and neighbors (reported in 43 per cent of the households). Only a few households (13 per cent) report that they have never grown mushrooms or have never been exposed to it in this way.

At the height of the boom, the demand for rice straw swept many of the fields clean of the stubble usually left there after harvest, thereby decreasing food for the roaming buffalo and the small increment of nutrients usually plowed back into the soil.

The advantages of mushroom culture cited by Goldsen and Ralis (1957) were 1) the cash outlay required was small, 2) returns were realized quickly as the cycle was completed in two to three weeks, 3) little heavy work was required and 4) at the time when Ralis made the survey, a ready market was available. When, in 1957, the price dropped sharply, most of the growers gave up.

Food for Homage-to-the-Teacher Rite  
Performed by a Buddhist Priest Who Was  
a Traditional Practitioner

| Item                             | Amount   | Cost<br>in<br>Baht | Item                             | Amount  | Cost<br>in<br>Baht |
|----------------------------------|----------|--------------------|----------------------------------|---------|--------------------|
| <u>Cereals and Legume Seeds:</u> |          |                    | <u>Fish and Meat (cont.):</u>    |         |                    |
| Rice noodles                     |          | 10.                | Dried fish                       | 6       | gift               |
| Soybeans & fermented vegetables  | 25 kg.   | 12.                | Roasted fish                     | 3 kg.   | gift               |
| Mung beans                       | 10 lit.  | 25.                | Shrimp paste                     | 2 kg.   | 18.                |
| Cassava flour                    |          | 2.25               | Lobsters                         |         | 15.                |
|                                  |          |                    | Lobsters (for soup)              |         | 2.50               |
| <u>Sugar and dessert:</u>        |          |                    | Pig's skin (for soup)            |         | 10.                |
| Palm sugar                       | 1 pail   | 67.                | Beef                             | 15 kg.  | 150.               |
| Cane sugar                       | 14 kg.   | 65.                | Ingredients for Mussel-man curry |         | 27.                |
| (2)kha-(5)nom                    | 500 cups | 35.                | Boiled chickens                  | 2       | 22.                |
| (3)tuaj-(1)foe                   |          |                    | Pig's head                       | 4 heads | 222.               |
| <u>Fish and Meat:</u>            |          |                    | Pork                             | 4 kg.   | 40.                |
| Fish (1)plaa                     |          | 6.                 |                                  |         |                    |
| (2)nyk for soup                  |          |                    |                                  |         |                    |
| Silurus and serpenthead          | 60 kg.   | gift               |                                  |         |                    |

## THE VILLAGE OF BANG CHAN

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Houses in the village vary considerably in appearance: from the bamboo and thatch dwellings of the poorest families to the sturdy, great gabled houses of teak built by Bang Chan's original settlers to the tiled and corrugated iron-roofed homes of the newly rich. Most, however, follow the traditional Siamese pattern of being built on posts two to ten feet off the ground, mainly as a protection against flood waters. Many homes in Bang Chan give the impression of being permanently unfinished, the bamboo houses because they require constant refurbishment, the wooden dwellings because they are made of teak which seasons best when left untreated and exposed directly to the elements. The merging upper-class urban pattern of painting teakwood has not yet reached Bang Chan. [777] • [787]

The major thoroughfare of the community, bisecting it in a north-south direction and perpendicular to the Bangkok-Minburi highway, is Khlong (or Canal) Bang Chan, which links with Khlong Sen Sen three kilometers south of the village. The latter, dug in the 1840's and originally intended as a military route to the Cambodian frontier, is one of several major canals dug during the mid-nineteenth century as part of the vast canal system that was constructed in the Central Plain when the region was opened for commercial rice production. Together with the highway built since World War II, a one-hour bus ride to the capital, Khlong Sen Sen, provides the villagers with their major access to Bangkok and the rest of the Central Plain. By motorboat a trip to Bangkok via this large, bustling canal takes approximately three hours. [491] [494] [484]

Despite these relatively good communications facilities and the long-standing Thai peasant tradition to *paj thiao* ("to go around"—for fun, on visits, pilgrimages, often for long distances) few people outside the immediate vicinity of the village have ever heard of Bang Chan. The community is neither a landmark nor is it located near one; it is not famed for any activities (other than having become the research site for the "American professors"); and because it is not a spatially integrated village, Bang Chan cannot even be found on any map of Thailand. Like most Thai settlements, Bang Chan has a Buddhist monastery and a government elementary school. It is these two structures that give the village its identity and the local people a sense of belonging to a community. People say that they live "at home in Bang Chan" because they make their merit at the monastery of Bang Chan and send their children to the Bang Chan school. Approximately five square miles in size and inhabited by 1,771 people living in 296 households (1956 village census), Bang Chan seems in physical appearance and social significance like the thousands of other communities that dot the rice fields of the great Central Plain. [361] [494] [368] [331] [362]

To what extent Bang Chan may be considered "typical" in an analytic sense of other villages of the Mae Nam Valley, or even of the country as a

423 from Bang Chan, the figure is as high as 85 percent (Dobby 1950). In  
184 these terms, therefore, it is best to view the incidence of land tenancy in  
Bang Chan as largely a function of local, historical circumstances.

369 A final word should be said about Bang Chan's proximity and ac-  
177 cessibility to Bangkok—the cornucopia of so much that is new, interesting,  
and desirable (if somewhat equivocally) to most Siamese peasants. It is  
clear that Bang Chan's closeness to the capital creates certain conditions  
that would not be present in a community situated, for example, 200  
kilometers, instead of 31 kilometers, from the nation's largest city. Simply  
on practical grounds, this nearness to the city permits the villagers to take  
advantage of opportunities—economic, recreational, and religious—which  
those living in distant provinces can obtain only after serious consideration  
of the financial and psychological expenses involved: "Do I have shoes to  
wear in the city? Do they treat people from the provinces well? With whom  
will I stay? Do I have the train fare?" A Bang Chaner who visits the capital  
[494] does not have to make such financial or emotional commitments, since it is  
only a one hour, three and one-half baht (seventeen and one-half cents)  
bus ride back home, although many do share with their up-country cousins  
the peasant's apprehensions about city manners.

The attractions of Bangkok take several forms: off-season jobs, medical  
care, kinship ties, special schools, great market places, famed monasteries or  
fairs, and the many other places where one can go to have fun. A survey  
[444] conducted in Bang Chan during 1955 (Goldsen and Ralis 1957) indicates  
that 62 percent of all household heads in the village visited Bangkok more  
than twice during the year for just such purposes. (Twenty-one percent  
had not gone to Bangkok at all, and 23 percent had gone more than ten  
times.) Many villagers, particularly younger men, attracted by the promise  
of regular wages, lighter work, and the bright lights of the city, leave Bang  
Chan with the hope that they will never have to return, although of course  
[464] many do. The Goldsen-Ralis survey reveals that 26 percent of their re-  
spondents had lived in Bangkok for a year or more, although for most this  
[701] was in fulfillment of military service.

369 Living in Bangkok is not something that is desired in and of itself. Bang  
177 Chaners are keenly aware of the disadvantages of city living—particularly  
181 its great expense and insecurity—and are impressed only by those indi-  
viduals who have made a success out of their urban sojourn. Most would  
agree that a Bangkok coolie, for all his exposure to the wonders of the  
modern world, lives a considerably less attractive life than they do.

369 The frequent transit between Bang Chan and Bangkok,<sup>8</sup> however,  
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[207] <sup>8</sup> Of less practical consequence than their direct personal experiences and word-  
[204] of-mouth contacts, but not to be ignored, are the villagers' contacts with Bangkok by  
[871] way of radio, newspapers, books, and of course by way of what their children bring

## THE VILLAGE OF BANG CHAN

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continually brings to the attention of the villagers urban standards and aspirations which, whenever possible, they attempt to apply to themselves. L. M. Hanks (1959b: 19) sees the operation of this characteristic acculturative mechanism in Bang Chan in terms of the villagers' "search for respectability": "A respectable cremation requires an orchestra; a respectable dwelling a tile roof; a respectable sickness an injection; and a respectable family must chaperone carefully its growing daughters. So run a host of points which help to bolster but not necessarily to advance social position."

Yet, after the relationship between village and town has been considered, Bang Chan remains very much a peasant community, whose residents are concerned first and foremost with the cultivation of rice, the maintenance of their monastery, and their own immediate social environment. Despite aspirations, many Bang Chan cremations must go without the orchestra; most dwellings lack the tile roof; injections are taken only by those who can afford them; and the necessity for boys and girls to work together during harvest time, a period of unavoidably infectious joy, precludes any rigidly imposed chaperonage. Perhaps the best assessment of the cultural position of Bang Chan was provided by the writer's field assistant—an individual born and reared in a village in the Northeast who, although in many respects worldly and urbane, maintained an almost passionate identification with his peasant background—who said: "When I first came here to Bang Chan, I never thought that people living so close to Bangkok could be real Thai villagers. But they are. They are not as friendly and hospitable as Northeastern peasants, and they are more interested in money, but they have a much greater love of the land. No city person could ever think and feel as they do."

*Family Life and Social Organization*

In terms of the traditional categories of social structural analysis, the social organization of Bang Chan is strikingly simple. There are essentially only five social units which demand, and toward which villagers express, relatively enduring psychological commitments. These are the nuclear family:

home from school, the curriculum for which is written and directed by Ministry of Education officials in the city. Approximately 14 percent of Bang Chan households have battery driven radios (there is no electricity in the village) and approximately 60 percent of the villagers can read, although considerably fewer actually have the proficiency to go comfortably through a newspaper; theoretically the same number of people can write, but few Bang Chan adults have the courage to take pencil to paper without feeling discomfort over their handwriting, spelling, and knowledge of stylistic forms. Newspapers that people bring home from town are passed around and read more for their entertainment than information; the few books that are seen in the village are pulp magazines, religious or moralistic writings, and occasionally do-it-yourself pamphlets ("How to Raise Chickens the Modern Way").

174 "extended families." The aim of all Bang Chan families even then was to  
596 attain a position in which they would be free from such obligations or  
would have other families dependent upon them.

596 In the intervening years the influx of new families into Bang Chan, the  
594 increased self-sufficiency of the individual nuclear families and, most im-  
177 portant, the increased acceptance of commercial values, have served to  
178 break down kindred groups so that today few kinsmen work their fields  
together and even fewer share their food or equipment with one another,  
beyond what has been noted above. Perhaps the only remaining universally  
[476] practiced function of the old kindred groups is the celebration of cere-  
[176] monials involving members of the family, particularly cremations and  
ordinations, the cost and merit of which are shared among the participants,  
depending upon their wealth. Very often people do not want to borrow  
[426] from or lend money or equipment to kinsmen precisely because the intru-  
sion of the kinship tie makes the collection of such debts doubly awkward  
("relatives take twice as long in repaying money; I do not want to lend  
anything to them"). However, the old forms have not been completely  
obliterated and when necessity requires or personal convenience moves an  
individual to look to others, the traditions of extended kinship, as indicated  
earlier, may be invoked.

596 For purposes of conceptual convenience, two types of kindred may be  
specified: the kind referred to above which involves kinsmen living in the  
village and to which Kaufman (1960) gives the name "spatially extended  
family"; and the type descriptive of relatives living outside Bang Chan,  
dispersed throughout other villages and provinces or in Bangkok, and  
called by Kaufman "the remotely extended family" and by L. M. Hanks  
(1959c) "the multi-local extended family." These terms are of course  
generic labels descriptive of actual or potential relationships between indi-  
viduals, not of specifically delimited groups. Sometimes Bang Chaners  
attempt to extend the definition of the latter type of relationship to indi-  
viduals who have never heard of them, but who may be in a position to  
help. *their son obtain a job in the city or get him admitted into a vocational*  
596 school. Hanks has shown how the multi-local extended family has to a  
167 limited extent in recent years rejuvenated extended kinship ties by becom-  
602 ing the major institutional mechanism through which villagers leave Bang  
178 Chan to seek their fortunes elsewhere. (This last phrase is not merely a  
figure of speech; many young Bang Chan men have what could be called  
almost a Dick Whittington view about leaving Bang Chan for Bangkok.)  
A cousin who undertakes to serve as a villager's liaison to a city job or who  
offers him a place to stay usually does so willingly, for it creates obligations  
which may be called upon later if need be.

596 The above description of variations and extensions has been presented

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[For information on contacts between Central Thai and Western culture, see Category 116, pp. iv, 6-22, 36-37 and 43.]

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\*243 annual depreciation of the equipment in question. In cases  
435 where the equipment still had some market values at the end  
of their servicable lives, these residual values were first  
deducted from the original costs before they were divided by  
the length of service. The most complicated cases were those  
of chala and mard boats and the noria, which involved annual  
maintenance and minor repair as well as periodical major re-  
pair in say every four or five years before they were finally  
and totally worn out at the end of their rather long services  
of from twenty to fifty years. In each of these cases, all  
items of such expenses -- annual maintenance and minor repairs  
as well as periodical major repairs -- were added to the orig-  
inal cost and the total was divided by the entire length of  
service in order to arrive at the annual depreciation figure.

\*243

178 With few exceptions, all farm equipment enumerated  
above have been used by Thai farmers for centuries. Thus,  
since the establishment of the village there has been no change  
in the use of such basic agricultural tools as the plow, har-  
row, hoe, weeding knife and sickle. Moreover, it may be said  
also that there have been only slight modifications, if any at  
all, in these equipment during the long course of their usage.  
The plow, harrow, or sickle which is now being used in Bangchan  
is perhaps of the same type and appearance as would have been  
seen centuries ago.

\*243

• 177 Standing in contrast to these basic agricultural tools,  
the first known propeller windmill in Thailand, according to  
178 testimonies by Bangchan informants, was invented by Nai Yong

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243 Manichaem of KY8 in 1940. An official report to the Director  
• 177 of the Department of Agriculture in 1940,<sup>2</sup> however, gives the  
178 credit to Nai San of Lard Buakhao, Minburi, who lived only four  
402 miles to the south of Manichaem's home. The buying up of  
gasoline engines by the Japanese during the occupation period  
served to facilitate the spread of this device. Gasoline  
engines probably came to the village about 1930 or slightly  
later. In 1948, there were five engines owned by Bangchan  
residents. Because of the exceptionally good water condition  
of that year, these engines were not used in rice production.  
They were not, therefore, included in our calculation of the  
cost of producing paddy in 1948. It was observed that their  
use was limited to fishing by the draining method. The winnow-  
ing machine, which utilizes a hand-operated fan arrangement,  
is relatively new. It is rather expensive, costing an average  
of 498 baht. Only 21 out of the 104 farmers in our 1948-sample  
could afford to own it, the rest being obliged to use the  
traditional winnowing method of simply tossing the grains into  
the air by wooden spatula and letting the wind carry away the  
chaffs.

According to historical improvement, farm equipment  
may thus be categorized as follow:

A. Old simple tools without any modifications:

Shovel, spade, hoe, plow, harrow, roller, yoke,  
weeding knife, sickle, boat, pitchfork, rake,  
broom, wooden spatula, basket, mat bin, box bin.

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2. Submitted by Yingsakdi Israsena and Kamol Janlekha.

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B. Old equipment with slight modifications:

Noria (larger ones are now used because they are more adapted to windmills than smaller ones to which human energy was applied in the old days).

C. Recently employed equipment, mostly labor saving devices:

Gasoline engine, first used in Bangchan in 1930 or slightly later.

Winnowing machine, relatively new, date of introduction into the village not certain.

Propeller windmill, allegedly invented in the village, first used in 1940.

On the whole, it may be said that very few improvements have been made in farm equipment. For this, two opposing explanations may be advanced: (1) Little attention has been paid in the past to farm equipment, resulting in continual using of primitive implements which are inefficient and could be improved if enough attention and effort along the line were given; (2) These basic farm equipment are functionally efficient although they may be simple in form -- the fact that there has been no structural change in the past few hundred years means that they have successfully stood the test of time rather than that the effort to improve these equipment has been lacking.

The author reserves his judgment on the validity of either of these two explanations, for scientific study of rice farm equipment in Thailand on which proper judgment may be based is not known to him.

Draft Animals

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In Bangchan, as in most of the rice producing areas of the country, only one kind of draft animal is used -- the buffalo. This subject has already been dealt with in the